

SUICIDE PREVENTION TASK FORCE

Meeting Minutes

August 16, 2005

Members Present: Carol Day, Keith Hotle, Jean Davies, Mike Huston, Lou Falgoust, Melissa Stahley-Cummings, Bill Quinn and Ellen Rutledge

Visitor: Jeff Brown, Hot Springs Sheriff's Office

I. Old Business

- A. Brochures. Carol Day reported that the revisions to the suicide prevention brochures should be completed before the next task force meeting. At that time, the task force will be presented with the revised versions for final review and comment.

II. New Business

- A. Suicide Prevention Specialist. Keith Hotle was introduced as the Suicide Prevention Specialist for the Mental Health Division. Keith will replace Carol Day as the Chairperson for the Suicide Prevention Task Force.
- B. Requests for Applications. Requests for Applications for funding local suicide prevention coalitions have been completed and mailed to the state mental health centers. The requested deadline for submission of RFAs is August 15, 2005. Several applicants have requested and been granted extensions of time for the filing of RFAs. Task Force members Ellen Rutledge and Melissa Stahley-Cummings volunteered to score applications received by the Task Force.
- C. Suicide Prevention Week. Keith reported that the Division has prepared a proposed proclamation for Governor Freudenthal declaring September 4-10, 2005 as Suicide Prevention Week in Wyoming. At present, the proclamation is being processed through the Department of Health. The governor also has been requested to provide PSAs in recognition of this event. The Division plans on utilizing funds allotted to the Suicide Prevention Initiative to promote Suicide Prevention Week and increase public awareness.
- D. Biennium Budget. Carol Day reported that she has completed a biennium budget request for the Suicide Prevention Initiative that reflect a request for substantial additional monies to be made available to fund local coalition activities.
- E. Planned Activities at State Level. Keith Hotle reported that there are a number of significant activities planned at the state level in advance of the 2006 legislative session. These activities include the following:
 - 1. The Division intends to create a comprehensive statewide suicide prevention network and development of an expanded suicide prevention website accessible through the existing Mental Health Division site.
 - 2. One of the Division priorities is to provide extensive community outreach and coalition building. To that end, Keith already has met with seven existing and potential coalitions and has plans to meet with several more in the near future.

3. As required by the implementing legislation, the Division will hold public meetings to receive comment on proposed revisions to the State Plan. Keith reported that rather than the single meeting required by the legislation, the Division anticipates conducting public meetings at locations in each of the four quadrants of the state. As part of the process of revising Wyoming's state plan, the Division will report on the state plans and prevention practices being employed in other states and report back to the task force with the results of that review.
 4. Keith reported that he is in the process of compiling a library of electronic and physical suicide-prevention resources for public use. There was a discussion among members concerning the best means to house physical resources, with suggestions that they be maintained under the state library WYLD system or through a cooperative arrangement with community colleges. The matter will be investigated further and a decision made when the collection begins to reach a point where it cannot reasonably be managed within the Division. Keith reported that he anticipates incorporating the collection of electronic materials into the design of the suicide prevention website, thereby affording access to anyone who accesses the site. Pursuant to implementing legislation, the Division will obtain access to the Cochrane Collaboration of evidence-based research, review such research and report on the implications for prevention prior to the 2006 legislative session.
 5. Members discussed how best to address specific prevention efforts, including outreach and training to primary care physicians and office staff, Instacare/clinic and emergency room staff, and nurses. Linkages through the Wyoming Hospital Association and state psychiatrists were suggested.
 6. Keith offered for discussion the idea of having a statewide suicide prevention conference and/or strategic planning session in spring 2005. The members agreed that the idea should be pursued, with a majority agreeing that the best format would be a two-day conference open to the general public, immediately preceded by a one-day strategic planning conference for local task force members. There was a discussion of potential keynote speakers and presenters, with a variety of public figures suggested, including Rosalyn Carter, Judy Collins, George Stephanopoulos, Margot Kidder and Tipper Gore. It was agreed that Keith would research the fees charged by the speakers suggested and others, and report back on his findings at the next meeting. The task force agreed that it was important to develop a unified theme and approach for the conference, and that it should offer specific tracks with continuing education units available for attendees belonging to various professional groups. Because of the time-intensive nature of planning a conference, the task force determined that it should meet on a monthly basis until further notice.
- F. Local Activities. Jean Davies reported that the Natrona County Suicide Prevention Task Force is sponsoring a "Morning Has Broken" walk for Sunday, September 18, 2005, beginning at Crossroads Park in Casper. Jean also passed out copies of a study conducted by the task force on suicides in Natrona County for the preceding five years. The study reflects an extensive review of primary data relating to county suicides and may provide substantive insights into local trends and patterns. Jean reported that the most recent newsletter produced by the Natrona County Task Force focuses on the challenges of returning Gulf War veterans and their families, as they face problems associated with post-combat reintegration.

Lou Falgoust reported that he is in the process of trying to organize a local coalition in Hot Springs County, after which he intends to submit a funding request to the task force. One of the concerns raised during the discussion of Lou's efforts was the requirement that state funding of local coalitions must be channeled through a local mental health center. There was some concern that this requirement inhibited the autonomy of local coalitions and negatively affected coalition-building efforts. Carol reminded the membership that the mental health centers should serve only as focal points for local prevention efforts and should not dictate the terms under which state funds were spent by the coalitions.

- G. Next Meeting Date. The next meeting of the task force will be at 10:00 a.m., September 27, 2005 at Central Wyoming Counseling Center in Casper, Wyoming.